

AUTO THIEVES MULCT BUYERS

THOUSANDS OF STOLEN CARS
SOLD TO UNSUSPECTING
BARGAIN HUNTERS.

IF FOUND, PURCHASER IS LOSER

Before Buying From Strangers Make
Sure They Are Rightful Owners
of Car They Are Trying to Sell.

At the present time a great many automobile thieves are operating in the State of Michigan. In 1919 the City of Detroit alone lost 3,482 automobiles, the value of which was \$3,166,327.00. The Detroit Police Department recovered 2,709 stolen automobiles the value of which was \$2,687,689.00. From these figures it will be seen that 773 cars of a value of \$467,683.00 were never recovered. For the first six months of 1929 Detroit has lost 1,393 automobiles of which 1,278 have been recovered, leaving 115 cars still unrecovered. This is only for the City of Detroit. Complete statistics of stolen cars for the whole State of Michigan, cannot be accurately compiled. The conclusion follows, however, that a vast amount of valuable property is being stolen each day thru automobile thefts.

"Bargains" Are Apt to Be Boomerangs

The people themselves are largely to blame for this state of affairs. A great many unsuspecting persons purchase an automobile cheaply from whatever person offers it for sale. No investigation whatever is made as to whether the vendor is legally the owner. The purchaser in a great many cases never requests to see the registration card, which is issued by the Secretary of State. The only question involved when a great many people purchase a car is the price. If it is a bargain the deal is closed. It is a simple matter for thieves to change the various Manufacturer's numbers on a car in such a way as to deceive any one not making a very thorough inspection. If actual cases are cited showing how automobile thieves operate, it may be of some help in showing the reader how easily he may be deceived in purchasing a stolen car.

One Farmer Sells Stolen Cars.

About the 15th of May 1929 a Deputy Sheriff in a certain County noticed that a farmer, apparently of good reputation, was in possession of a new car every few days. The farmer was posing as a Used Car Dealer and stated that he had purchased the cars in Detroit "on the market". Investigation disclosed that the cars were stolen and following this lead forty stolen cars were recovered. Automobile thieves in this particular instance operated as follows:

One of the organization stole the car from the streets of Detroit, ran it to a secret garage and changed the motor and serial numbers in such a way that the change could not be easily detected. The car was then transferred to this certain County and easily disposed of because it was offered for sale at a very attractive price, and no one in this County had any reason, of course, to believe that the possessor of it was not the legal owner.

The authorities upon discovering that the car was stolen, simply took possession of it, and after it had been identified by its original owner, who returned to him. One farmer who had purchased a stolen car when asked whether he missed it when the authorities took it away from him stated, "that he did not miss it half as much as the old horse he sold to purchase it." This particular farmer had sold a good horse to purchase a stolen car. As a result of his foolish investment he lost both.

Make Sure Seller Owns The Car.

If you desire to purchase a car go to some authorized dealer and pay the market price rather than take a chance of purchasing from a "fly by night dealer". Buy from some one who you know will be in business tomorrow and the day after. Do not think you are getting "a good thing" because some one is offering you a practically new car "dirt cheap". Since thousands of cars are being stolen it stands to reason that some one must purchase these cars. Thieves steal to sell; they do not steal automobiles to use themselves, the chance of detection is too great.

At any rate if you cannot resist the temptation to purchase a new car from an unknown person, cheaply, at least take all the reasonable precautions in protecting yourself from purchasing a stolen car. Inspect the serial and engine numbers yourself. Always secure the registration card as issued by the Secretary of State. Demand a Bill of Sale properly made out; establish the identity of the vendor, so that you could locate him in case you desire. If you are in doubt, call some police officer or sheriff and have him look at it.

The Detroit Automobile Club has issued a warning as set out in various posters distributed over the State. This is for your protection and is not to serve any selfish purpose whatever. The people at large should know what is going on within the borders of Michigan, and the figures set out at the beginning of this article show what a great traffic is going on in stolen automobiles. Think twice before you purchase a car whose owner you know nothing about.

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